

9. ENERGY CONSERVATION OPPORTUNITIES

ENERGY CONSERVATION AND RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Energy conservation is achieved at both the local and individual level. During the planning and development process, there are many opportunities for local governments to support energy efficient models. Such proven methods include:

- Enforce the State of California Title 24 laws – state energy efficiency standards for residential and nonresidential buildings. New subdivision areas should adhere to the California Subdivision Map Act, which requires consideration of maximum natural heating and cooling features, including solar power. Additionally, building codes inspectors should be credentialed from the California Building Officials Training Institute, ensuring they are familiar with all energy efficiency models.
- Preserve and encourage planting trees in neighborhoods to provide shade in summer and reduce heat loss in winter. Successful methods include placing trees to the west and northwest of houses to shade from the hot summer sun and grouping trees to protect them from harsh elements and support their longevity. Trees can reduce air temperatures 5-10° F from shading and evapotranspiration (water in leaves converting into vapor, cooling the air).
- Encourage energy efficient landscaping for resource conservation by developing guidelines that emphasize proper irrigation techniques and sustainable landscaping (organic fertilizers and pesticides).
- Consider light-colored surfacing on pavements and rooftops to reduce heat absorption. New materials for shingled rooftops and paved roadways are being developed that reflect more sunlight and last longer.
- In future street development, encourage narrower street widths to reduce pavement area and allow more room for roadside trees and greenery.
- Work with builders and developers to place houses in optimal area on site, with regard to sun and natural breezes.
- Promote the construction of energy efficient new homes with assistance from the Energy Star Homes Program (supported by the EPA and DOE). Energy Star homes reduce energy consumption by 30% by using energy

efficient lighting, ventilation, windows, and replacing electricity with natural gas where appropriate.

- Provide incentives to retrofit older homes with energy efficient features before resale or major remodeling.
- Encourage pool covers and solar pool heating systems in place of conventional methods in residential areas.
- Encourage solar energy and other renewable resources.

ENERGY CONSERVATION AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Energy efficiency opportunities are an important consideration in affordable housing planning and analysis. High energy costs for low-income and fixed-income households directly affect the affordability of both rental units and home ownership. As basic energy is an inelastic housing cost, the ability to provide conservation assistance is especially critical.

For individuals and households, there are programs available to help conserve energy and reduce energy costs. The Town of Los Gatos can promote and provide assistance for households to access the following opportunities:

Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

Low-income households (less than 60% of the State Median Income Level) qualify for financial assistance and free housing renovations to offset their energy costs. Funded by the Department of Health and Human Services, the LIHEAP Block Grant provides two services, weatherization assistance and financial assistance.

- **The Weatherization Program** provides homes with free weatherization services to conserve energy, including attic insulation, weather-stripping, minor housing repairs, and related energy conservation measures.
- **The Homes Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)** provides financial assistance to pay the energy bills. The average payment within the State of California is \$182 per household per year.

Energy Efficient Mortgages (EEM)

Homebuyers that purchase energy efficient homes or renovate houses to conserve energy qualify for special mortgage benefits through EEMs. Determined by results from the Home Energy Rating System (HERS), home loans may include energy improvement costs reducing homeowner's utility bills. The California Home Energy Efficient Rating System (CHEERS) is a local HERS and is supported by PG&E, lending institutions, and building associations.

Relief for Energy Assistance Through Community Help (REACH)

Sponsored by Pacific Gas and Electric and administered by the Salvation Army, REACH provides energy assistance to low-income customers. Households that do not qualify for HEAP or another alternative assistance program may receive a one-time payment aid for energy costs. In the last 18 years, REACH has assisted 369,000 households in Northern California with more than \$56 million in total aid.